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ABSTRACT

Instructional television via videotape can be a good source of assistance in alleviating comprehension problems that occur when foreign languages are taught by the audiolingual method. Television can be used in language instruction in two ways: demonstrations to the student or demonstrations by the student. Demonstrations to the student can provide good illustrations of the context, gestures, facial and mouth movements that naturally accompany language production and reception. Visual scenes can often provide meaning to the content of the conversation. In addition, videotapes allow a measure of individualized instruction and can preserve lectures for students who missed them or want to review them. The principal advantage of demonstration by the student is the provision of feedback and evaluation of his own and his classmates' speech. Instructional television via videotape should certainly be used more than it has been in the past. (WH)

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EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION: ITS USE IN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

Jane Harper

Emphasis on the listening and speaking skills of languages resulted in wide-spread utilization of the audio-lingual method of instruction. However, a common complaint about the outcomes of the audio-lingual classroom is that students too frequently learn to mimic sounds without gaining an understanding of the meanings. This lack of comprehension is often evidenced by inability to use dialogue lines in other sequences and situations or to respond to questions which employ varying combinations of vocabulary and structural items previously studied. Also, many students do not use the gestures and facial expressions which demonstrate comprehension of an idea or feeling and are integral parts of the communication of that idea or feeling.

Instructional television via videotape can be a good source of assistance in alleviating these communication problems. There are basically two purposes which can be served with videotapes: (1) demonstrations to the student and (2) demonstrations by the student.

Demonstrations to the student, designed to clarify the meaning of the expressions being studied, may be presented in several different formats.

1. Dramatization of the core dialogues of each unit.

   It is very helpful for students to observe as well as to listen to other people speaking the target language. Meaning of the utterances can be gained from the setting, the props, the motions, gestures and facial expressions of the persons

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involved. Watching the videotaped version also seems to aid in remembering the sequence of events and, thus, dialogue lines for student performance.

2. Dramatization of similar dialogues.

Dramatizations of conversations similar to that of the core dialogue composed of familiar vocabulary and structural items give students the opportunity to practice and improve their listening comprehension skill. Such videotapes can be used as self-evaluation devices for students to test their listening ability. Dialogues of this type have proven to be favorites and the most frequently utilized by many students.[1]

3. Pronunciation instruction and practice.

Students in large classes often are not close enough to the instructor to see the shaping of the mouth for an utterance or to hear clearly the sound. Videotaped close-ups of a person's mouth and face as the sounds are made allow each student to see and hear the production of each sound.

4. Core lectures on structures being presented.

Explanation of structure is needed at varying times and in varying amounts by languag students. Some attend all class sessions alertly and easily grasp and use proper grammar and syntax; others are often absent or absent-minded; illness or personal conflicts necessitate occasional absences by most. Some students require little explanation for understanding; others need repeated explaining and examples. In addition, the students in a group may have very different backgrounds as to kind and

recentness of previous foreign language experience. Basic explanations of structural elements with examples (dramatized and/or written) can be recorded onto videotape so that any student may use or review the material whenever desired.

5. Mini-class sessions.

Some students express a need to observe groups in session, as indicated by persons who request to audit a course before or while taking one for credit. This need can be met with videotapes of class meetings or of staged teacher-led interaction sessions with students similar in design to regular class activities.

6. Presentations of cultural information.

Currently there is increasing emphasis on the development of awareness of and interest in culture as well as language. Videotapes of real scenes or of dramatizations of situations and conversations can be used to teach cultural elements as can videotaped lectures about a wide range of topics such as art, music, education, history, politics, etc.

7. Guest lecturers and performers.

Videotape can record speakers or performers who are at the school, in the community, at a neighboring university, or anywhere once can obtain permission to make the recording. These tapes will make it possible for students who could not go to the performance to see it at another time. Also, students have an opportunity to watch and listen, to ask questions about points that they did not understand, then to view the tape again. If the videotapes are saved, students taking courses one year can

see performances from several different years.

8. Programs from network television.

Programs aired on network television stations can be recorded onto videotape. These programs can be edited with inserts of introduction and explanation by the instructor for later use with students. Also, permission can sometimes be obtained for school use of complete programs.

In all of these formats of videotape utilization, the student plays a rather passive role - observing, listening, perhaps notating a finished product. In the other type of activity, demonstration by the student, the student himself is involved in the production of the tape. There are two primary reasons for videotaping by students, (1) the production of a tape to be kept for use by other students and (2) the production of a tape for personal self-evaluation by the student.

Students may take active roles in the production of videotapes in any of the aforementioned categories. The realization that their efforts will be viewed by their peers and by other students in later years usually gives them the incentive to perform well. In one experiment the language skills of the students involved in making videotapes of dialogues (as reflected in their course grades) developed at a more rapid rate and to a greater degree of proficiency than did the language skills of the students using the tapes as one of their instructional modes.[2]

Videotaping can also be used by students for their own self-evaluation. After having practiced pronunciation of the core dialogue individually with audio tapes, a small group of students can perform the dialogue in front of

the cameras, recording their performance onto videotape. They can then view the tape immediately, listening to their pronunciation, intonation and rhythm, observing their gestures and expressions, and comparing their taped performance with the instructional videotape of the core dialogue. The process can be done repeatedly, re-recording on the same tape as desired.

Videotapes can be effective teaching/learning devices in a number of instructional settings. In class they are helpful in introducing new dialogues and in reviewing those previously studied. In small-group interaction sessions they can be used to present the topic for the conversation of each meeting. Peer tutors can review the structure and vocabulary limits of a given module before a tutoring session. The tapes can be a constantly available source of input for individual students.

Many colleges and schools have videotape production and/or playback facilities which are little used due to lack of imagination or willingness of instructors to invest time in learning appropriate uses. The added variety and improved student performance, possible results of videotape utilization, could enhance the image of foreign language classes and has resulted in increased enrollments.

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NOTES

[1]Data drawn from computerized student of utilization records of laboratory carrels and materials in Oral Response Laboratory and Learning Hall, Northeast Campus, Tarrant County Junior College, Hurst, Texas, 1973.

[2]Data drawn from records of students of French on Northeast Campus, Tarrant County Junior College, 1970.

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